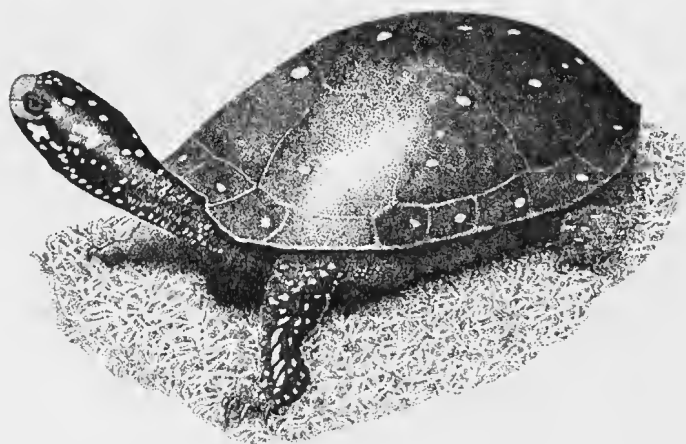


TRAIL & LANDSCAPE



*A Publication Concerned With
Natural History and Conservation*

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

— Founded 1879 —

President

Michael Murphy

Objectives of the Club: To promote the appreciation, preservation and conservation of Canada's natural heritage; to encourage investigation and publish the results of research in all fields of natural history and to diffuse the information on these fields as widely as possible; to support and co-operate with organizations engaged in preserving, maintaining or restoring environments of high quality for living things.

Club Publications: THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST, a quarterly devoted to reporting research in all fields of natural history relevant to Canada, and TRAIL & LANDSCAPE, a quarterly providing articles on the natural history of the Ottawa Valley and on Club activities.

Field Trips, Lectures and other natural history activities are arranged for local members; see "Coming Events" in this issue.

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TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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Welcome New Members

Ottawa Area

Regie Alam & Family
Christiane Blanchette
Doug Bullock
Rick T. Collins & Family
Anna M. Derks & Family
Gabriel Durocher / Dianne Cox
Sheila Edwards
William G. Grant
Isha Haniff
Andrea Howard
Jennifer R. Lynd
Lysanne Maynard & Family
Jennifer L. Montague
E. David H. Mowat & Family
Sue & Jeff Novotny
Paul & Sara Ritchie
Sandy A. Schmidt & Family
Pamela A. Smith
Sally H. Stolberg
Alexandra Tighe
Robyn Vezina
John L. Walmsley / Marie Craig

Carol G. Barnard
A. Brown
Charles P. (Pat) Byers
Avra de Witt
Nick Diespecker / Carol Throop
David A. George & Family
François M.J. Gérin-Lajoie
Kate Gupta & family
Bronwyn Seabrook Harkness
Klaus Kostenbauer
Alex MacDonald
Roxanne L. Merits
Stephanic Morden
Mary Nixon
Luke A. Periard
Susan Robertson
Catherine & Robert Smith
Susan Steedman
Tuula K. Talvila
Audrey M. Turner
K.L. Vlasman & Family

Other Areas

Robert E. King & Family, Val des Monts QC
Robin A. & Roberta I. Woods, Gatineau QC
Michèle D. Piercey-Normore, Winnipeg MB
Patricia D. Kerr, Lachine QC
Fred Burchsted, Beverly MA USA

Henry Steger
Chair, Membership Committee
May 13, 2006

Conservation Matters

Stan Rosenbaum

Larose Forest

Until recently, public opinion among residents of the United Counties of Prescott and Russell was generally in favour of opening parts of Larose Forest to commercial developments, such as the theatrical program put forward by Francoscénie Inc. Thanks to a tenacious (and costly) appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) by a few dedicated local people, the theatrical development was temporarily set up outside the forest. Now, local opinion is moving away from the concept of allowing building and other infrastructure development in the forest. This welcome change will be reflected in the upcoming five-year review of the United Counties' Official Plan, if the first draft is adopted without amendment. The land that was re-zoned explicitly for Francoscénie Inc. is now shown on a draft map as forested, rather than open space. Plans are being developed for sustainable forest management, as well as various recreational uses.

Alfred Bog

The Alfred Bog Committee's first and only chairman Frank Pope convened meeting number 32 on 6 April 2006. The struggle to save Alfred bog from destruction by drainage and peat mining began in 1982 when the Vankleek Hill Nature Society asked the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club for assistance in opposing a zoning change from "conservation" to "agriculture" for a large area of the bog. Now that 90 % of the bog is owned by the Nature Conservancy and managed by Ontario Parks, Frank decided it was time to retire. He deserves heartfelt thanks from all Club members for his two decades and more of hard work, that in the end proved successful.

Privately-owned Wetlands in Rural Ottawa

Despite community meetings, the City of Ottawa and the Ontario Ministry of Natural resources are moving slowly towards recognizing some privately owned wetlands as provincially significant. Perhaps the problem is the City's reluctance to complete this aspect of its Official Plan, especially when there is conflict between area residents and farmers. Meanwhile, a few landowners have bulldozed their wetlands, presumably on the basis that in time their designation as significant will expire. This sorry situation reveals weaknesses in legislation that only reforms at the provincial level can correct.

Light Rail Maintenance Yard Public Working Group (PWG)

At the City's invitation, Stan Rosenbaum represented the Club at PWG meetings during February, March and April at City Hall. The PWG was established for the purpose of recommending one of three potential sites for the rail maintenance yard. You may ask, why should the Club be interested in this? The reason is that one of the potential sites is the existing Walkley rail yard, that is being offered for sale by CP Rail just south of Walkley Avenue and East of Bank Street, while the other two would entail tearing up greenspace.

The meetings aroused plenty of controversy. City staff recommend that the yard be located on Ottawa Airport Authority land at Bowesville Road, just south of the airport and in line with the longest runway. For the City, this brings a financial inducement in that the land would not have to be purchased, but would be on a 50-year lease with the first five years free. City staff also argued that this site would be more efficient because early-morning trains would start closer to the rush-hour passenger load at the western end (Barrhaven).

For some of the PWG representatives, including this writer, it seems that using this site would make it less efficient to link the Airport into the LRT service, and that perhaps the Airport Authority does not want an LRT link because it would cut into lucrative airport parking revenues. Another factor is that there is an alternative proposal to use the Bowesville site to set up an array of 30 multi-use sports fields that would generate LRT traffic at the planned Bowesville Station. Hence, an interest by this Club in preserving existing greenspace by utilizing an available "brownfield" site turns into an unfamiliar examination of commuter traffic flows, rail yard operating economics, environmentally-friendly soccer field maintenance, and land purchase versus leasing options.

The PWG, which included representatives of the NCC, the City's advisory committees, the Ottawa Central Railway (who use the other half of the Walkley site), the Airport Authority, Transport 2000, and many community associations, brought in without dissent a recommendation to re-use the Walkley site. A joint meeting of the City's Corporate Services and Transportation Committees is set for May 16, and full Council is set to debate these recommendations, and make a decision on May 24.

The 2006 Soirée and the Awards for 2005

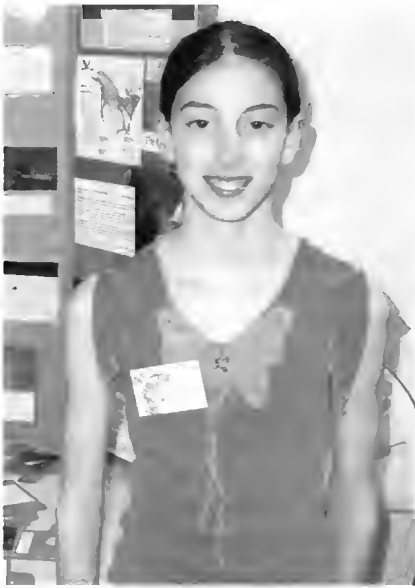
K. McLachlan Hamilton

St. Basil's Church was the place to be on April 29 because that was evening of the OFNC annual soirée. There were over 70 people and included several past and present Macoun Field Club members—it was like a mini reunion. The quality of the artwork was excellent, as always, and I thoroughly enjoyed the Macoun Club presentations, the snacks and beverages.

This year there were six presentations and eight participants. Anneka Burghout's comprehensive study on the Common Loon delighted all the birders in the group. So did Ian Jason-Byerlay with his presentation on the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Apparently there was a deep discussion with one member as to whether they really are extinct or was the recent sighting really valid. Kyle Burghout's poster on the St. Lawrence Belugas reminded me of my excursions to the St. Lawrence in search for these magnificent sea mammals. If you have never visited the St. Lawrence region to see the whales, I suggest you put it on your "must do" list. I also had a long chat with Sasha St-Louis Hodgins about her keen interest in wild horses. I never realized how many different breeds there were or all the different sizes and shapes found across the breeds. Francis, Julien and Patrick Caron's display on wetlands was quite entertaining. Their thirst for discovery was evident in their wetland project and in their discussion about the wetland near their house. I think there must be a lot of "soakers" in that family. Gabriel Levac's table was filled with snail shells, rocks and minerals, mounted butterflies and beetles, almost anything imaginable. He knew about his collection and could talk to anyone about any of the items. He is a true collector and, in my opinion, a future taxonomist.

The evening continued with a welcome from Club president, Michael Murphy, was the official Master of Ceremonies. He introduced Jeff Skevington who in turn introduced the Macoun participants and presented them with tokens of appreciation.

Gabriel Levac, President of the Macoun Club, was next to come up and give us an update on Macoun activities and a talk on his memories of the past year. Gabriel described some of the year's presentations and field trips. He mentioned the session on microbiology and animal adaptation as well as some of the field trips, in particular the winter trip. He thanked all the people involved with Macoun,



Anneka Burghout



Ian Jason-Byerlay



Kyle Burghout



Sasha St-Louis

Photographs by J. Skevington



Francis, Julien and Patrick Caron. Photo by J. Skevington.

especially Rob Lee who puts his heart and soul into this club.

Next Mike along with Irwin Brodo presented the Club awards for 2005. The award winners for 2005 were: Suzanne Deschênes and Gillian Marston for Member of the Year, Christine Hanrahan for the George McGee Service Award, Michael Léveillé for the Mary Stuart Education Award, Iola Price for the OFNC Conservation Award (member), Friends of the Carp River for the non-member



Gabriel Levac. Photo by J. Skevington.



Suzanne and Gillian. Photo by Ken Taylor.

were also responsible for the Club's first photography contest as well as the current one "Tale of the Trail" which is currently in full force. The photographs obtained through contest have now been catalogued in a digital library and will be used in exhibits, on Club materials and at Club events.

The George McGee Service Award went to Christine Hanrahan for her contributions to the OFNC for over 25 years. Since becoming a member in the late 1970s, Christine has been involved with the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and has served on the Conservation, Awards, and Birds Committees. She not

Conservation Award, and the Macoun Field Club for the Anne Hanes Natural History Award

Suzanne and Gillian received Member of the year in recognition for their hard work on developing education and publicity materials which led to a successful membership drive. They



Christine Hanrahan. Photograph by Ken Taylor

only leads walks, attends endless municipal/regional/special interest meetings, and a regular contributor to *T&L*, but was also the local coordinator for, not one but, both of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlases.



Michael Léveillé. Photo by Ken Taylor.

Michael Léveillé received the Mary Stuart Education Award for his direction in the design and implementation of the “Macoun Marsh” at the Beechwood Cemetery. This diverse ecosystem inside a large urban centre continues to be to be an inspiration to two schools, the Beechwood Cemetery, the City of Ottawa and beyond. Michael, an accomplished artist and science teacher, founded the Ottawa Paleontology Society in 1991, also created the “Collector’s Corner” at the Museum of Nature, and was responsible for the illustrations for “Fergie the Frog,” a series of children’s storybooks.

Iola Price was the recipient of the Conservation Award (Member) in recognition of her work with the City of Ottawa’s Forest and Greenspace Advisory Committee. As Chair, Iola has provided a credible voice on issues related to the conservation of trees, forests and greenspace in the National Capital Region. She was involved in the Nepean Creek Corridor, the Riverside South and Leitrim Community Designs, the Carp Ridge housing project and the Phase 2 Leitrim Wetlands development. Iola is someone who truly speaks for the trees.

The Club thought the Friends of the Carp River was worthy of Conservation Award (non-Member) for their efforts in restoring and protecting the Carp River ecosystem. Beginning as a concerned citizen’s group, this organization has dedicated countless hours to reduce (and hopefully reverse) the river’s decline. With the cooperation of local landowners, provincial foresters, and help from many volunteers, over 20,000 trees and shrubs were planted along the shoreline to control soil erosion and siltation. The Friends’ success in maintaining community involvement is seen in the continued rehabilitation of this “mighty” river.



Michael Murphy presenting the award to Janet Mason Of the Friends of the Jock River. Irwin Brodo, Chair of the Awards Committee in back. Photo by Ken Taylor.

The Macoun Field Club was an obvious choice for the Anne Hanes Natural History Award, that it is a wonder that they have not received it in the past. Over a 35 year period (and still counting), members of the Club have examined and documented their own special tract of land known as the Macoun Study Area in Bells Corners. Originally conceived by Macoun members, not adult leaders, this "study area" has documented 54 species of trees, 29 species of



Rob Lee accepting the award for the Macoun Field Club. Photo by Ken Taylor

mammals, 215 species of lichens as well as countless wildflowers, birds, reptiles and amphibians. They have discovered many rarities, amassed amazing amounts of information and have recorded the disappearance of certain species.

The full citations will be published in an upcoming issue of the Canadian Field Naturalist.

The evening concluded with Eleanor Thompson winning the art/photography contest, Bernie Ladouceur receiving the door prize and a game of Nature Trivia while tea and coffee was served. Fenja Brodo, Excursion and Lectures Chair, thanked everyone who helped organize the soirée (Bob Prescott who was responsible for the ticket design, Phil Jeffries who was the primary organizer of this event, and Connie Clark and crew for all the refreshments—beginning and after).



Annie Belair (right) and Eleanor Thompson (left) with her winning photograph. Michael Murphy in back. Photo by Ken Taylor.

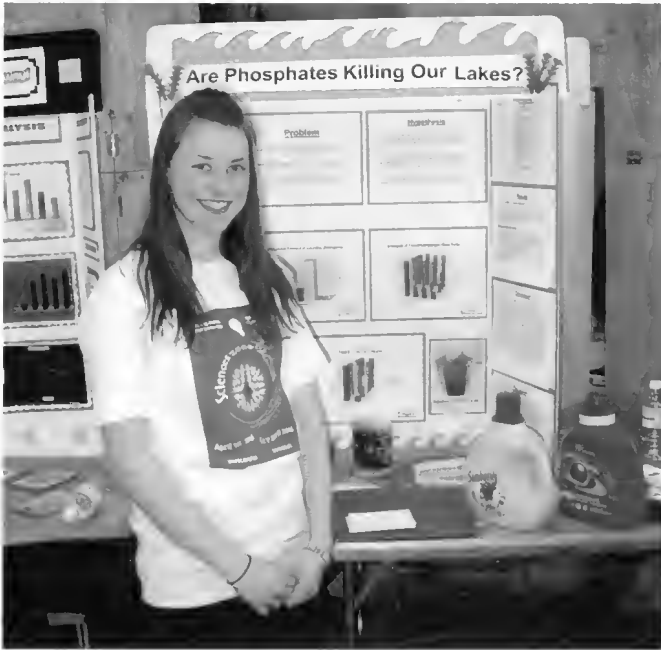
Report on the 2006 Ottawa Regional Science Fair

Kathy Conlan with Photographs by Jeff Skevington

Jeff Skevington and I were invited to judge the science projects submitted for the OFNC award for the 45th Ottawa Regional Science Fair, held at Carleton University on April 1, 2006. The following table shows the number of projects at the fair, classified by project type and age group.

Project subject	Junior	Intermediate	Senior
Life sciences	20	4	1
Biotechnology	3	2	1
Earth & environmental science	28	6	1
Physical and mathematical sciences	31	10	3
Engineering and computing sciences	27	5	1
Health sciences	29	3	4
Total	138	30	11

We took a slightly different approach to our judging this year, using not only scientific ability as a criterion, but also whether the student demonstrated a strong interest in natural history and may be encouraged to further that interest through the OFNC award. Although we judged within each age group, we considered that each of the three awards could go to any age group. We also did not constrain ourselves to those who submitted their projects for consideration as there were a number of additional projects that could be considered for the award. Jeff and I evaluated about 20 projects through the day. The OFNC award is \$50 and a one year membership for each age group. The projects were excellent, and we had considerable difficulty reducing our choices to three. On behalf of OFNC, we selected the following for awards, all of which were in the junior category.



Alexandra with poster. Photo by J. Skevington.

“Are Phosphates Killing our Lakes?” by Alexandra Tighe of Turnbull School of Learning. Alexandra measured the phosphate levels in Tide, Sunlight, President’s Choice, and an environmentally friendly clothes cleaner. They discovered some high phosphate levels in the commercial brands and a deadly impact on an aquatic plant. Yet all four had the

same clothes cleaning abilities. Seek out an environmentally friendly detergent, she recommends.

“Les Hygromètres de la Nature” by Bronwyn Seabrook Harkness of Rideau Valley Middle School. Bronwyn discovered that Scotch Pine cones grow upward when they are young and still closed, then turn downward when they are older and ready to open. A closed cone facing upwards does not respond to humidity and open up, but the same cone when turned upside down, will open, enabling its seeds to be released.

“Ci Tu Est un Grillon Quelle Sort de Nourriture Veut-tu Manger?” Crickets are picky! Robyn and Stephanie gave crickets multiple chances to try strawberries, cucumbers and fish food—cucumbers were the clear favourite. They compared the pHs of the three and discovered that strawberries were considerably more acidic than cucumbers and fish food. Perhaps strawberry extracts would make a useful organic pest spray for crops? Robyn and Stephanie found their cricket subjects loved a toy cricket they offered them, and began stridulating back to the toy whenever they turned it on.



Bronwyn with presentation. Photo by J. Skevington.



Robyn and Stephanie. Photo by J. Skevington.

News from the FWG: Spring 2006

Christine Hanrahan

The mild winter progressed into an early and unseasonably warm spring. By late March the temperatures were reaching 12 - 20 °C, a trend that continued into April with little precipitation until mid-May. Many birds arrived back at the garden earlier than usual and plants flowered in record time.

Starting with this update, I'll be introducing you to our FWG volunteers. These folk are essential to the maintenance and operation of the garden and without them FWG would have difficulty continuing. Look for the first two profiles below.

Backyard Garden News



Backyard Garden. Photo by C. Hanrahan

Jay Ladell, our BYG manager, continues implementing his five year plan. For 2006 the Woodland Walk area will be expanded with more plantings appropriate to the setting. The stone walls by the pond and near the entrance are to be extended, no doubt delighting the chipmunks who frequent the wall on a regular basis. Work will continue on the other beds and more labels will be added to identify the plants.

Jay reports that about 40 species of native plants are being grown by volunteers for the 2006 plant sale. Watch for news about this event in the next update.

Work in the BYG takes place on Friday mornings from spring through fall. If you enjoy gardening with convivial company, want to learn more about native plants and/or gardening for wildlife, and have time to spare, why not volunteer? Contact Jay at jay_ladell@yahoo.com or leave a message at 234-6767.

Events

The Great Backyard Bird Count was held February 17-20 with 12 species counted over the course of the four days. The FWG has participated in this event for several years now. The count is held across North America and results are sent to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for compilation.

The Ottawa Wildlife Festival celebrated its 21st anniversary in 2006 and once again held its Wildlife Awareness event at Billings Bridge Mall. As part of the festival, the FWG always has a display at this event. The weekend proved tremendously busy and volunteers fielded many questions and received positive comments about the garden. Many people signed up to volunteer at the garden and have been contacted by Gretchen Denton, who coordinates the volunteers.

The FWG also plays a big part in the Wildlife Festival's Forum series, which this year dealt with the theme "Getting to Know Your Watershed." Over 130 people attended the event at the Canadian Museum of Nature.

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) is always the second Saturday in May. In the 10 years that I've been organizing this event at FWG I have seen the number of participants increase substantially, particularly when the weather is good! The highlight is the guided birding walk, this year most capably led by Peter Fuller. The 29 participants found 38 species including Green Herons, orioles, and many warblers.

Problems

Fires: In the last update I gleefully reported on the absence of campfires at FWG during the fall. Unfortunately, as if to make up for the earlier lack, this spring saw far more than usual. At least eight campfires were made, in three different locations. Notable this year was the sheer size of some of the fires. Our brush piles, created for wildlife cover, were used as the source of firewood, although some trees were also hacked and broken down. Fortunately, none of the fires spread but the ones near the birdfeeder make us particularly nervous. For the first time that I can remember, there were quantities of broken beer bottles, and during the first two incidents, the glass

appeared to be deliberately embedded into the soil.

Once again we remind readers that if they see anything suspicious at FWG to please call AAFC Security at 759-1985 and the FWG at 234-6767.

Managing the Garden

Invasive species

Our usual preoccupation at this time of year is with invasive species. It is hard not to worry about them when their prolific growth stares us in the face every time we go out!

Garlic Mustard keeps popping up in old and new locations. However, it appears that the work of volunteers in digging out this plant is having an effect. We may never be entirely free of Garlic Mustard, but so far, we are cautiously optimistic that we might be able to at least control it. And really, when it comes to some of these aggressive invasive species, control is about as good as it gets. Complete eradication is difficult.

Another invasive that keeps appearing is buckthorn. Both Common and Glossy Buckthorn grow at FWG and both are equally pervasive. While many very large trees have been removed, the growth of seedlings is astonishing and they need to be tackled while still easy to root out. Work on controlling this species has been ongoing since 2001, largely spearheaded by Tony Denton who is waging a one-man battle against this shrub. We are trying to balance the removal of buckthorn with the needs of wildlife, a sometimes uneasy compromise. Because buckthorn formed large portions of the thickets at FWG, its removal has depleted (but not eradicated) the cover and nest sites in these areas.

Pale Swallowwort or Dog-strangling Vine (DSV for short), is the species that causes us the most headaches. I'll report more on this plant in the next update.

Butterfly Meadow

Work is underway on the long-anticipated rejuvenation of our Butterfly Meadow. Diane Lepage has taken the lead on this and developed a list of requirements including butterfly-friendly plants, rocks and logs for butterflies to bask on. Part of the meadow has been "rototilled" and an attempt made to remove DSV roots. Later, various native plants will be planted there. Just west of the Butterfly Meadow is a small area where some small Hackberry saplings were planted a few years ago to attract butterflies. Rodent damage was extensive this past winter and we are not sure the trees will survive. However, several very large Hackberry trees were planted this spring and will be well-protected next winter. The addition of the Hackberry stand expands the butterfly site to include more than the meadow area.

Planting

A group of Pathfinders came to help out at the FWG one evening in May. They planted violets in the Ash Woods and then placed white stones around them so they could identify "their" plants if they come back later. They also helped bag the old

DSV stems in the Butterfly Meadow.

Miscellaneous

Award

The FWG was honoured to receive an award from the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects for service to the environment. Unfortunately, nobody from FWG was able to attend the ceremony in Toronto, but Wendy Francis of ON Nature accepted on our behalf. Frank Pope delivered the framed certificate to us and it looks very nice. We must be doing something right!

Plants and Animals

Birds

Nothing evokes spring like the wonderful sound of Red-winged Blackbirds. By 10 March they were back, calling from the still-frozen pond and jostling with others at the BYG feeder. By early April crows could be seen carrying nesting material, House Sparrows and starlings were feeding young, and Killdeer, Canada Geese, Common Grackles, Song Sparrows and American Robins were found in good numbers. A pair of kestrels once again arrived at the red barn and hung around for some weeks in the large trees just south of the building. However, by late April they had vanished and the only birds seen coming out of the kestrel nest box were starlings. This scenario happened last year too, and in the end the kestrels reared several young in the nest box so there is hope yet! Tree Swallows arrived at FWG on 5 April, but their numbers didn't increase substantially for another week. At the time of writing (mid-May) many have claimed nest boxes around the garden and are busy mating and building nests. From mid-April on it was easy to see new arrivals almost daily. By the time IMBD rolled around, many warblers had arrived including Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Black-throated Blue, Black-and-white, Yellow, Nashville, and Magnolia Warblers. All of these plus a Great Egret flying over the garden were found on the guided birding walk led by Peter Fuller that day.

A Northern Mockingbird was found next to the Interpretive Centre on 24 April, and on 25 April a new bird for the FWG list was found by Gretchen Denton, an Eastern Towhee (Rufous-sided Towhee) bringing the total number of species to 128. A pair of Green Herons arrived back in early May, checking out their 2004 nest site. Whether they will nest this year remains to be seen. Last year they abandoned the garden for parts unknown. As I write, there are still lots of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, and a host of other birds around the garden. None of these will nest at FWG, but it is always a treat to see them.

Other Fauna

I was surprised and delighted to find a large Blanding's Turtle basking on a hummock of dried cattails in the pond on the morning of 10 April. It has been at least seven or eight years since we've seen one. A few weeks later a Painted Turtle appeared, possibly the same one that was around last year. Over near the Ash Woods a Snapping Turtle was attempting to lay eggs, but we're not sure if she was successful. A few Wood Frogs began calling in mid-April but the full chorus didn't occur until

later in the month. Green Frogs were heard in late April and American Toads and Gray Treefrogs by early May.



The two amigos (Blanding's turtles). Photo by Colin Freebury.

Raccoons may be more common at FWG than we know, but if so, we rarely see them. However, I did spot one curled up high in the branches of an Amur Corktree in the Ravine. Foxes are back at their usual den site on the farm, although no sign of any young yet. We're hoping that if the fox population is restored, they will control the small rodents, bringing them down to a more acceptable level.

Groundhogs are scarce at FWG, though not on the farm. However, one brave soul has taken up residence in a fairly well hidden spot. Apart from a higher than usual number of chipmunks this spring and the regular complement of Red Squirrels and Gray Squirrels, the only other mammal to report on is the muskrat which still seems to find our pond to its liking. I'm wondering if this little animal is responsible for the die-back of cattails in the pond that I alluded to in a previous update. Muskrats relish the roots of cattails and we've got enough to keep one animal happy for a long time.

Last summer the muskrat was also eating Flowcring Rush roots.

It is still early for most butterflies, but we've seen a few species this spring. A Compton Tortoiseshell was the first of the season, found in the Ash Woods in early April. This large, attractive species overwinters as an adult and like the more familiar Mourning Cloak, can be found on warm days of early spring flitting through the woods. Although not new for the FWG Butterfly list, we rarely see them at the garden. A few Mourning Cloaks, Cabbage Whites, and Spring Azures are the only other species found to date. While Spring Azures were common to abundant in other locations around the region, at the FWG they were extremely scarce this spring as they have been for several years now. At one time we'd see many of these striking blue insects flying over the open grassy areas.

FWG Volunteers

We rarely get to know the volunteers who work hard usually behind the scenes in many organizations. Things are little different at the FWG. In order to remedy this, the updates will introduce you to the people who faithfully and regularly contribute to the smooth running of the garden. First up are two long-serving volunteers whose names are probably known to regular garden visitors but perhaps not to others. People volunteer for a variety of reasons. For many, the social aspect is very important, for others it is commitment to a cause or a belief. As you'll see, the two people below have slightly differing reasons for volunteering at FWG, but the end result is that we all benefit from their participation.



David Hobden. Photo by C. Hanrahan

David Hobden is the long-time Chair of the FWG Management Committee. David came to the FWG shortly after retiring when he decided he wanted to participate in meaningful volunteer work. David had long supported the philosophy behind the garden, and with his deep interest in conservation (he is also a member of the OFNC Conservation Committee), natural history and a desire to engage in some practical

outdoor work, the FWG was a good fit.

David also wanted to learn more about gardening and native plants, and volunteering at FWG was a good education in this respect, as it has been for so many others. But perhaps the biggest reason for David's continued commitment to the FWG is his belief in providing a space where urban dwellers can have contact with nature. This is something the FWG can provide. As he remarked: *"People need to experience nature in some form if they are to learn to appreciate it. We cannot expect people to support conservation if they do not value nature. To me FWG is not just a worthy end in itself, it is also part of a greater conservation strategy, providing accessible nature and serving to reduce public pressure on more significant natural areas."*

Every group needs someone to hold things together, a "leader" or "boss," the person to whom others look for direction. When the previous Chair, Peter Hall left, David was pressed into taking the position. I think that David would prefer a less public role, for he has said *"I don't really relish major leadership roles so the sooner he (Peter) returns and takes it back . . ."* However, he also notes *"I regard*

administration in any organization as something of an essential chore, but I like to know what is going on, so I tend to get involved and try to do my share of the work." The rest of us are grateful to David for continuing in his role as Chair, a necessary but not always desired position!



Sandy Garland. Photo by C. Hanrahan.

For **Sandy Garland**, the social aspect is important. The people she meets at FWG enhance the overall experience of working at the garden. Nonetheless, a strong belief in the FWG project is the primary motivation for volunteering. Like David, Sandy wanted to learn more about native plants and natural history and as she says, even after many years at the FWG *"I keep learning new things."* Sandy got involved with FWG the same time I did, in 1993. She was interested in working in the Ash Woods where she has remained Habitat Manager. She has also been very involved with the Friday morning BYG group, although in the last few

years she has gathered together a good Sunday morning group to work elsewhere in the garden. They engage in a multitude of tasks, be it invasive species control,

planting, "rototilling," weeding, whatever needs doing.

Sandy has been very active in the battle with Pale Swallowwort/Dog-strangling Vine, and continues exploring ways to control this serious invasive. Sandy also maintains the FWG website, soliciting articles and photos for the site, as well as preparing material herself. When asked what she gets out of the long hours she puts in at the garden, Sandy replied *"Lots of peace. And some satisfaction. I've met lots of new people who I really like. People ask me questions all the time, which is sort of nice; even when I don't know the answers, it doesn't matter. They still think I know what's going on."* Sounds like a good reason to carry on.

Volunteer Opportunities

If you would like to help us remove invasive species, plant trees, work in the BYG, or with any number of other activities, please contact the FWG (details at end of article).

The Friday morning (BYG) and Sunday morning (the rest of the FWG) work crews will carry on work through the fall, while the Wednesday evening group will meet on an as needed basis.

Acknowledgments:

Many thanks to Colin Freebury for his priceless photo of the two amigos, and to all the volunteers who make the garden a rewarding place to be.

FWG Details and Contact Information

The FWG is located off Prince of Wales Drive on the Central Experimental Farm. For more information please visit the website at:

<http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher.php>. Brochures about the garden are available from the Centre on Friday mornings from spring through fall, Sunday afternoons in the summer, or during the week June through August when we have a summer employee.

- FWG phone number: 613-234-6767
- David Hobden, Chair, FWG Management Committee: dhobden@gamma.ca
- Jay Ladell, BYG Manager: jay_ladell@yahoo.com
- Sandy Garland: website and information about the FWG: sgarland@gamma.ca
- Christine Hanrahan: bird and wildlife observations: vanessa@gamma.ca

False Indigo-Bush, *Amorpha fruticosa* L., an addition to the Ottawa flora and a possible native of the Ottawa Valley

Paul Catling

When False Indigo-Bush, *Amorpha fruticosa*, (Figure 1) was found growing on the shoulder of Prince of Wales Ave. near the entrance to the Fletcher Wildlife Garden (45.3863°N, -75.7064°W), it raised the question of its status in the district. It occurs



Figure 1. Mature False Indigo-Bush (Amorpha fruticosa) shrub with seedling nearby (left). Mature shrub on the road shoulder (right). Photographed near the entrance to the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, PMC.

in at least one other location in the Ottawa Valley. This is McCreary's Point, a sandy peninsula on the south side of the mouth of the Bonnechere River where it meets the Ottawa River (45.5185°N, -76.5564°W). At this site it grows with dogwoods and other shrubs and was regarded as possibly native. These are the only locations documented in the Ottawa Valley region in the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada plant collection (DAO) and the Canadian Museum of Nature plant collection (CAN).

Other rare and mainly western species (including several grasses) occur in specialized periodically flooded habitats along the Ottawa River. They may have spread from the west in early postglacial times. On the other hand they may have been brought from the west by indigenous people or voyageurs along the ancient Ottawa River trade route. Unlike the others, the False Indigo-Bush at McCreary's Point could also have originated from a nearby planting. Regardless of how it reached the Ottawa River shores of Renfrew, it was a surprise to find that it had not been recorded in the city of Ottawa (former Ottawa-Carleton) according to the most recent list (Brunton 2005).



Figure 2. Flowering branch of False Indigo-Bush. Photographed near the entrance to the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, PMC.

At the location near the Fletcher garden it appears to have established as an escape from cultivation. Within 20 m are several possibly planted specimens along the edge of a field where they are growing close to planted lilacs. Within 4 m of these thick, 2 m high shrubs were 9 small shrubs, 10 to 60 cm tall, that apparently seeded in on their own (Figure 1 left). One 20 cm tall plant, 3 m away from a mature shrub, was excavated and was not connected underground to the large shrub. These young shrubs appeared to be different ages were growing in old field vegetation among Smooth Brome Grass (*Bromus inermis* Leyss.), Field Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense* L.) and Lilac (*Syringa* spp.) seedlings. The one large shrub on the gravelly shoulder of

Prince of Wales Ave. (Figure 1, right) probably also seeded in on its own since roadside plantings are usually located at a distance from the road edge and rarely located on the gravelly shoulders of roads. This large 2 m tall plant was associated with Smooth Brome, White Sweet Clover (*Melilotus alba* Medikus), Green Bristle Grass or Foxtail (*Setaria viridis* (L.) Beauv.), Annual Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia* L.), Prickly Lettuce (*Lactuca serriola* L.) and a young American Elm (*Ulmus americana* L.). Since several plants had apparently spread on their own, False Indigo-Bush is an addition to the wild plants of Ottawa.

False Indigo-Bush might be readily mistaken for a young Black Locust Tree (*Robinia pseudo-acacia* L.), an introduced cultivated tree that has established and is spreading on the natural landscape. The flowers of Black Locust (and other escaped and spreading locusts) are completely different, being large, whitish to rose-red and resembling the flowers of peas. Flowers of False Indigo-Bush are small, have a single wrap-around petal and are purplish-blue with extruded stamens (Figure 2).

The pinnately compound leaves have numerous leaflets (Figure 2) that are distinctively glandular-dotted below (under a microscope or using a lens). The upcurved pods are also distinctively glandular-dotted (Figure 3). False Indigo-bush is sometimes confused with Blue False Indigo (*Baptisia australis* (L.) R. Br. ex Ait f.) an ornamental plant which is occasionally established in the wild, but which differs in its trifoliate leaves and larger blue pea-like flowers.



Figure 3. Portion of the fruiting branch of False Indigo-Bush showing the upcurved fruits with glandular dots. Photographed near the entrance to the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, PMC.

False Indigo-Bush was not included in the Soper and Heimbürger (1982) book on Ontario shrubs, although it had been known as an escape in Ontario for some time prior to that publication (Reznicek 1982) and it was first collected in the province by Tripp in 1917 on Pelee Island, this presumably a native occurrence (Gillett 1987). It is widespread to the south and west and is native to the prairie provinces where it most often occurs along river banks.



Figure 4. Root nodules (up to 5 mm in diameter) that contain nitrogen-fixing bacteria. These are from a 20 cm tall plant of A. fruticosa that spread from nearby planted specimens on Prince of Wales Ave. Photographed near the entrance to the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, PMC.

Although it is rare in Ontario as a native species and as an escape, False Indigo-Bush is a rapidly spreading alien in parts of the Pacific Northwest (Glad & Hulse 1993). Its initial introduction outside its native range may have been in connection with its use as a source of blue dye. The plant contains some indigo pigment, but quantities are generally too small to be commercially significant. It is currently planted as an ornamental, as a windbreak and to limit soil erosion. As with many other members

of the Pea family, the roots of False Indigo-Bush contain nodules with nitrogen-fixing bacteria (Figure 4). Where the bushes become established the nitrogen content of the soil is increased.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Dan Brunton, Mike Oldham and Bill Cody for their comments.

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Use of the Invasive Pale Swallowwort by Birds and Small Mammals

Christine Hanrahan

Pale swallowwort (*Cynanchum rossicum*), also known as Dog-strangling Vine (DSV), is a highly invasive species of natural areas. It can rapidly out-compete existing vegetation thereby reducing overall biodiversity of a site. It can survive in sun and shade, and in damp or dry conditions. Once established, it is extremely hard to eradicate. At the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, the plant is widespread in both wooded and open sites. Various methods of control have been tried at FWG over the last few years including pulling, digging, cutting, mowing, and smothering. None have so far proven effective but we need to look at some of these methods over the long term. We are still researching other methods.

Invasive alien plants have been in this country for decades and in some cases, for centuries, although the incursion of new species has occurred more rapidly in recent times. As they displace native vegetation and change the composition of natural ecosystems, the impact on the fauna is significant. There is no doubt that invasive species present a considerable environmental and economic problem wherever they occur. However, sometimes native species of wildlife have adapted to the invasive alien plants and occasionally appear to have benefited (for example, the adaptation of the Henry's Elfin butterfly to Glossy Buckthorn, *Rhamnus frangula*, has meant an increase in abundance of this species (Layberry, et al. 1998)). Many invasive species, such as Purple Loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*, are known to attract various insects, and I seem to remember reading that biologists have found 40 species of native wildlife using this plant for various purposes. Locally, beaver were reported eating Purple Loosestrife near the Champlain Bridge (Darbyshire and Consaul, 1999). In light of this, and given the abundance of DSV at the Fletcher garden, I wondered if it too was being used by birds or other wildlife for nesting material or some other purpose.

Birds

In 2003 I noticed a Yellow Warbler gathering DSV seed fluff (coma) leftover from the previous year and incorporating it into its nest. The following year I found DSV fluff in the nest of a house sparrow. Knowing that many birds will gather material close to their nest site and utilize a variety of items from natural to man-made, it

seemed logical they would use at least some parts of this abundant plant when building nests. Between 2002 and 2005 I collected the dislodged nests of various species at FWG and put them in the Interpretive Centre. In early 2006 I began examining the material in these nests. With the expert help of botanist Stephen Darbyshire, much of the material in these nests was identified. What was found was very interesting!

Nests of seven species from the FWG were analyzed. Generally only one nest per species was collected, but four Yellow Warbler nests were examined for a total of 11 nests. Ten of the 11 nests used at least some DSV in their construction, and some were made only from this plant. Both the stem fibre and the fluff were used. The DSV stems provide long, flexible fibres, strands of which are readily stripped off the winter-softened stems. The seed pods retain a significant amount of fluffs over the winter, providing good lining material at a time when early nesters especially, may be hard pressed to find other similar stuff from plants such as thistles and milkweeds.



Baltimore Oriole nest. Photo by C. Hanrahan.

The Baltimore Oriole nest was made entirely of DSV stem fibre and lined primarily with DSV fluff. The nest was exceptionally strong and even after four years, shows no signs of disintegrating. Only one nest of Warbling Vireo was obtained and it too was constructed largely of DSV stem fibre, although

interestingly, no DSV fluff was used as lining.

Every Yellow Warbler nest examined used DSV stem fibre and seed fluff, and one was made almost exclusively from this material. All were lined with, amongst other matter, large quantities of DSV fluff. In one nest, the DSV fluff was packed tightly around other fibres on the inside of the nest as well as tamped down at the bottom to create a thick lining.

Red-eyed virco, House Sparrow, Song Sparrow and Red-winged Blackbird nests all

contained varying amounts of DSV stem fibre and/or fluff. Only the American Goldfinch nest did not contain any DSV. However, goldfinches are a common nesting bird at the garden with four, five or more pairs nesting every year. Only one nest was examined and it may be that an analysis of more goldfinch nests will show use of DSV.



Yellow Warbler Nest. Photo by C. Hanrahan.

Mammals

Two large winter nests of meadow voles were found in the Old Field area of the FWG, although distorted and difficult to determine structure. Both were made of approximately 90% DSV stem fibre, fluff and seed pods, and 10% grass. At the bottom of each nest was an exceptionally thick pile of DSV fluff which could have been lining, or a seed stash, although very few seeds were found. Whether the voles were indeed stockpiling DSV seeds (while still attached to the fluff) or whether they were simply using the silky fluff for a snug lining is hard to say. But wouldn't it be interesting if DSV seeds formed part of their diet?

I would be interested in hearing of any other uses by wildlife of Pale Swallowwort. Please contact me at vanessa@magma.ca.

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Turtle Watch 2006

David Seburn

Turtles are in serious conservation trouble. Six of Ontario's eight species are on the national "species at risk" list. Only the Painted Turtle and Snapping Turtle are deemed not at risk. Two of the species of most concern in eastern Ontario are the Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) and the Stinkpot or Musk Turtle (*Sternotherus odoratus*), both of which are considered "Threatened." Even the distribution of these species is still poorly known. For example, there is only one record of a Blanding's Turtle from all of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry County. Identifying where these turtles still occur is the first step in helping to protect these species and their habitats.

This year I am running a Turtle Watch program, focusing on the Blanding's Turtle and Stinkpot. It is expanded from the Blanding's Turtle Watch program which I have coordinated for the past two years. All of the data collected will be shared with the Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC) of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources which tracks rare species. I encourage you to submit your observations. Please keep your eyes open for Blanding's Turtles and Stinkpots as you hike, drive and canoe this summer.

How to Recognize a Blanding's Turtle

With bright yellow on the underside of the head and neck, it is difficult to confuse a Blanding's Turtle with any of the other turtles native to Ontario. In addition, the carapace or upper shell is domed or helmet-shaped, in comparison with the flatter carapace of the Painted Turtle. Adult Blanding's Turtles are typically 13-20 cm in length, but can get even bigger. This makes them bigger than many Painted Turtles, but smaller than many Snapping Turtles. Check out the following website for a photo and more on the Blanding's Turtle:

<http://www.carcnet.ca/english/reptiles/tour/glossary/blandt/blandt2.htm>.

How to Recognize a Stinkpot

The Stinkpot is a small turtle rarely more than 13 cm in carapace (upper shell) length. The top shell is brown or black, often with dark lines and dashes. It is highly arched and commonly covered in algae. Two light stripes are present on each side of the head, one above and one below the eye. Older individuals may have a mottled head pattern instead. Some Stinkpots will exude strong-smelling secretions from musk glands if disturbed. Check out the following website for a photo and more on

the Stinkpot: <http://www.carcnet.ca/english/reptiles/tour/glossary/muskt/muskt2.htm>.

Submitting Observations

At a minimum, please submit the date and location of your observations. If you can provide the UTM coordinates from a topographic map (or a GPS) that would be great (e.g. 0446250 4972150, Mapsheet 31B/13, NAD1927*). Please also provide a text description of the location (e.g. County Road 20, 0.5 km east of County Road 18, Township of North Grenville, Leeds and Grenville County) and the habitat (adjacent to Kemptville Creek, marshy area). Please submit your observations even if you can't provide an exact location. Observations can be submitted directly to me at seburns@cyberus.ca. Please put Turtle Watch in the subject header.

Footnote:

*NAD refers to the map datum, in essence the model of the world used to create the map. NAD1927 is North American Datum 1927. Older topographic maps use this datum, while newer maps use NAD 1983. This information is provided in very small print to the right of the scale bars on a topographic map.

Harvester

Linda Jeays

Fast erratic flight
skirting an alder thicket
life on the edge.

The Harvester butterfly (*Feniseca tarquinius*) can be found in the Ottawa area in late May, July and August.

Club Member Seeking Help

Marc Potvin

I'm an OFNC member seeking opportunities to shoot local wildlife—with a video camera that is!

I'm particularly interested in spots that are as undisturbed as possible and devoid of "human made sounds" such as noise from adjacent highways/dirt roads, boats, ATVs, etc. I'm neither a professional naturalist nor a professional filmmaker, but a hobbyist in both fields with very amateur video equipment (for now anyway). I have a bit of spare time over the summer and would like to spend some of it learning and practising the art of capturing moments in the daily lives of our local fauna. I am of course very aware of the possible impacts of my presence on the animals so I will proceed very conscientiously and unobtrusively, striving not to have a negative affect any animal's well-being and/or chances of survival. My video camera has a telephoto lens (35mm equivalent of 1050mm / 2300mm with optical converter) and I operate as much as possible out of a blind.

I'm basically looking for people who could help me in one of the following ways:

- 1) Give me tips on good local nature spots to film mammals and birds.
- 2) Let me onto their out of town properties to film wildlife.
- 3) Let me participate in their own wildlife film outings and possibly collaborate.
- 4) Take the time to share their wildlife filming experiences and give some tips.

As I've said, I'm a hobbyist not a professional—although I may get more serious about nature filming if my enthusiasm passes the test of time. For now, this filming is for my personal enjoyment and for showing to family and friends (those that still have the patience to watch all my videos). If there is any interest in the amateur wildlife videos I make for whatever non-profit / educational purposes, I'm open to suggestions. If not . . . I won't be offended, promise! For those who give me access to their properties, I'll gladly offer them a copy of the videos I've made on their land.

If anyone is willing to offer some help in one of the ways noted above (or in any other ways I haven't thought of . . .), please contact me at 819-777-4984 or marcpotvin@yahoo.ca. Thanks in advance.

Late Fall - Early Spring Birding Highlights

01 November 2005 - 30 April 2006

Chris Lewis

LATE FALL & WINTER

At least four **Red-throated Loons** were seen on the Ottawa between Shirleys Bay and Britannia in the early part of November and strong east winds on the 6th of that month sent a **CATTLE EGRET** struggling over Constance Bay. Up to 400 **Snow Geese** congregated in a large pond along Moodie Dr. south of Trail Rd. throughout November, and were joined by a **Greater White-fronted Goose** and a **Tundra Swan** into early December. Multiple sightings of **Cackling Geese** were also reported from this pond as well as the Ottawa River. Other more regular waterfowl were well-represented and were highlighted by **HARLEQUIN DUCKS** (at least two on the Ottawa River, 14 - 21 November), a **Barrow's Goldeneye**, and a return visit by a male **COMMON x BARROW'S HYBRID** to the Rideau River, where it lingered near the Rideau Tennis club from 27 November until at least 05 January. Unusual ducks for winter in our area included a female **Lesser Scaup** and **Hooded Merganser** who seemed content to hang out with the ridiculously tame **Mallards** on the Rideau at Manotick into the New Year, and a **Gadwall** on the Madawaska River in Arnprior on 26 December.

Several reports of both **Bald** and **Golden Eagles** were a great reminder that both of these magnificent species continue to make a comeback. However, **Rough-legged Hawks** were again strangely scarce this season until April when the flooding of the agricultural fields flushed out their food, mainly Meadow Voles. Similarly, **Gray Partridge** were at a premium—a few elusive coveys were seen near Ste-Rose and Navan in the east (26 November - 04 December) and near Marathon and Richmond in the west early in the New Year. There was no shortage of **Wild Turkeys** though, with record high numbers tallied on all of the local Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs), and several large flocks were seen on numerous occasions within the 50 km and beyond. Turkeys, it would seem, are here to stay! Noteworthy among the rails and allied species was a **Common Moorhen**, a *first record* for the Ottawa-Gatineau CBC, at the Sabourin marsh in Gatineau on 18 December. The annual fall gathering of **Sandhill Cranes** in the cornfields near the Mer Bleue bog culminated in at least

46 birds on 04 November. Good numbers of "white-winged" gulls, especially **Glaucous Gulls** were seen mainly on the Ottawa River as well as in fields south of the city throughout the period, and the trend of increasing numbers of late-season **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** continued as well.

It was a great winter for owls! A mind-boggling total (for our region) of *six species* was reported during a single week in mid-February: **Eastern Screech, Great Horned, Snowy, Great Gray, Barred and Northern Saw-whet Owls**. A good number of **Snowy Owls** wintered in rural locations around Ottawa and three **Northern Hawk Owls** spent some time on both the Québec and Ontario sides of the 50 km, but evidently only one of these lingered into January, north of St-Pierre-de-Wakefield. Following the previous winter's phenomenal **Great Gray Owl** irruption, a smaller "echo" invasion occurred this season, with at least 18 individuals noted in and around the 50 km. The last report was of a bird photographed on Booth St. in downtown Ottawa on 19 March. The "northern" woodpeckers were absent this time around, but a tenacious family of "southerners" again successfully overwintered—both adult and juvenile **Red-headed Woodpeckers** continued to haunt the old burn area breeding site in Constance Bay throughout the period.

After a small incursion of **Boreal Chickadees** into our region in early November, at least one unusually vocal, visible, and cooperative individual ensconced itself in Forest Park, a small but very "birdy" community east of Embrun, and remained here until at least the end of February. A **Carolina Wren** also visited a feeder in Forest Park in December, and another was present on a property in Carp from early fall until mid-December as well. Other bonus feeder-birds included a **Hermit Thrush** in Kanata for at least three weeks in January, **Fox Sparrows** in various locations throughout the winter, a **Chipping Sparrow** in Richmond in mid-January, and a beautiful male **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** (again in the somehow "bird-magnetic" community of Forest Park) until well into March. Not tied to feeders, but nonetheless faithful to particular properties, were a **TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE** in Reeveeraig near Kars, and **Northern Mockingbirds** in Blossom Park (Ottawa) and McCordick Rd. near North Gower throughout the winter. Finally, those who hoped for a winter finch irruption this year were again disappointed. Only relatively small and scattered numbers of **Pine Grosbeaks, White-winged Crossbills, Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins** and **Evening Grosbeaks** were seen, and only three **Hoary Redpolls** made brief appearances in the New Year.

EARLY SPRING

March certainly came in like a lion this year, armed with blustery winds that made birding a challenge. April was mercifully more pleasant but ended on a chilly note

as well. However, there was a good showing of as many as 37 **Horned Grebes** and 22 **Red-necked Grebes** on the Ottawa River between Britannia Bay and Constance Bay on the 23rd, and a **Great Egret** graced the Rideau River between the Tennis Club and Billings Bridge from 23 April onward. Most of our expected spring migrants arrived back on schedule, with a few “unscheduled” goodies.

Although the flooding in the agricultural fields around Bear Brook, Cobb's Lake Creek and the South Nation River was nowhere near as extensive as in some years, this area, as well as other locations such as the Ottawa River and the Moodie Dr. pond, were very interesting and productive throughout the month of April. Single **Greater White-fronted Geese** were found with the multiple 1000s of **Canada Geese** (there are without a doubt more “Canadas” every year!) on Milton Rd. near Carlsbad Springs, the Jock River near Twin Elm, and the Moodie Dr. pond and adjacent fields. The Moodie bird was still present on 29 April. At least three **ROSS'S GEESE** created some excitement—two were seen near Ste-Rose east of Casselman on 05 April and a single bird may have followed a flock of Canadas from the Petersen's Turf Farms near Manotick Station on 18 April to the Navan area on the 23rd. Several reports of **Cackling Geese** came in after the first report on 25 March, and a *record early* **Brant** showed up on Milton Rd. on 06 April. This is the second consecutive year that an individual of this species has appeared in early April in the same location! Up to seven **Tundra Swans** (a high number for the Ottawa area) rested in the flooded fields between Milton Rd. and Frank Kenny Rd. from 25 March - 07 April, and although **Trumpeter Swans** are not yet “countable” in the 50 km, a pair was notable among the waterfowl on the ice at Baie de la Pentecôte in Parc National de Plaisance on 12 April. Interesting ducks included two very early pairs of **Gadwall** on the Ottawa River on 12 March, and a male **EURASIAN WIGEON** that was first spotted east of Bourget on 02 April was possibly the same bird that was seen later on from at least 12 - 17 April in the Marais des Laiches Ouest sector of the marshes along the Ottawa River east of Gatineau. **Redheads** arrived at Shirleys Bay and the Moodie Dr. pond from 05 April onward, perhaps considering breeding here again this year, and a very early male **Ruddy Duck** showed up on the Ottawa River opposite the Rivermead golf course on 31 March.

Raptor highlights again included several sightings of **Bald** and **Golden Eagles**, all three of our **accipiter** species, as well as **Red-shouldered Hawks**, **American Kestrels**, and several pairs of **Merlins** in courtship display as the season progressed. One of the most sought-after raptors was a grey morph **Gyr Falcon** discovered at the Central Experimental Farm on 13 February, that continued to tantalize us with fleeting (and for some lucky birders, *not* so brief) appearances from downtown Ottawa to the Carlington quarry until at least 29 March. A wintering pair of **Peregrine Falcons** was seen interacting with a third bird in mid-March in downtown

Ottawa. If nesting occurs again on the Crowne Plaza Hotel, this will be the 10th Anniversary for Ottawa's downtown Peregrines. **Wild Turkeys** continued to be seen literally everywhere, including some odd locations such as a backyard in Orleans (11 March) and the Britannia Conservation Area (08 - 28 April). Five **Sandhill Cranes** arrived back in their "traditional" area in early April along Milton Rd., where their loud calls and courtship dances were enjoyed by fortunate observers, and single birds were seen in flight over Constance Creek and the Mer Bleue boardwalk later in the month. The first shorebirds were, as expected, **Killdeer**, **Greater Yellowlegs**, and **Wilson's Snipe**. **Upland Sandpipers** were also back right on time on 26 April near Russell, followed by **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Spotted Sandpiper** and **Wilson's Phalarope** in the excellent habitat at the Embrun sewage lagoons on the 30th. In the latter days of April, a single early **Bonaparte's Gull** at Shirleys Bay was augmented by at least five at the Moodie Dr. pond along with three adult **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** and a striking adult **Iceland Gull** in breeding plumage on 24 April.

The remarkable owl season in Ottawa continued, especially in the Clyde Ave. woods, where five species including **Great Gray**, **Long-eared** and **Northern Saw-whet** were seen into mid-April. A late **Snowy Owl** was still around from 21-27 April near Perth, a pair of **Great Horned Owls** nested for the third consecutive year in the Britannia Conservation Area and produced two healthy owlets, and the last report of a **Great Gray Owl** was on 19 March.

Apart from the rarities (the **TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE** and **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** mentioned in the "winter" segment), there were several highlights on the songbird scene. Noteworthy passerines included our largest species, the **Common Raven** (which was rare anywhere near Ottawa three decades ago) . . . this year, in addition to several sightings from all over the 50 km, the pair in the Carlington quarry built a new nest and raised yet another brood of five vigorous youngsters. It has been 10 years, if not longer, that this pair has had incredible success in this quarry, and it leads one to wonder how many of their progeny have boosted our local raven population? **Northern Shrikes** were plentiful with a few lingering into early April. A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** (still rare in our area) appeared south of the international airport on 23 April, and another was seen at the Innis Point Bird Observatory on the 28th. A very early **Gray Catbird** was reported from the Mer Bleue bog boardwalk on 22 April. A number of **Northern Mockingbirds** was discovered in diverse locations including Pinhey's Point and the Fletcher Wildlife Garden. **Bohemian Waxwings** were widespread until early February. An out-of-season **Cedar Waxwing** associated with a small flock of **American Robins** at Britannia in late January and early February, but this species was unusually scarce as spring advanced. The first **warblers** appeared in mid-April—no surprise that they were **Yellow-rumped** and **Pink Warbler**, among the

typical vanguard of **Golden-crowned** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, **Hermit Thrush**, and various **sparrow** species that moved through in more of a trickle than a wave. However, an inordinate number of migrant **Eastern Towhees**, still a rare breeder in our area, were seen in the last week of April, with sightings from a few unusual locations including the feeders at Hilda Rd. by Shirleys Bay and the Fletcher Wildlife Garden. A surprisingly early **Rusty Blackbird** at Britannia on 12 March must have wondered why he was in such a hurry to get here; the rest of his kind arrived at their more appropriate time . . . six weeks later.

The beginning of May is always an exciting time, with much new life to look forward to as the weather warms up and the major portion of spring passerine migration gets into full swing. With all the keen and enthusiastic observers in our region, there are certain to be some interesting reports. A sincere thank you to everyone who takes the time to call the OFNC Bird Status Line—the more eyes and ears out there and the more communication, the more we *all* get to enjoy the birds!

To listen to and report local bird sightings, please call (613) 860-9000 and follow the instructions. Weekly summaries are recorded on the Line, and are posted on the OFNC web site as well as the Ontario Field-Ornithologists' ONTBIRDS listserve. A wealth of information about birding in the National Capital region, as well as other aspects of local natural history can be found at www.ofnc.ca. Another impressive and very up-to-date resource is the NeilyWorld web site <http://www.neilyworld.com/birding.htm>.

Animation

Linda Jeays

Leaf on a silky thread
or butterfly?
In this breeze
both would be dancing.

New Venue for Our Monthly Meetings

Fenja Brodo

The Victoria Memorial Building, housing the displays of the **Canadian Museum of Nature**, is under construction, as attendees of our monthly meetings, and recent visitors to the CMN, are well aware. We have been very fortunate to have had the use of the lovely auditorium for many years, as well as the professional services of very fine technicians, to make our meetings a success. Unfortunately that is coming to an end. The beautiful auditorium is destined to be torn down. The good news, however, is that another facility in another part of this grand building will be ready for us by January 2007.

In the meantime, for the meetings on 12th September, 10th October, 14th November and 12th December, we have secured **Salon B in the K.W. Neatby Building, Central Experimental Farm, 960 Carling Avenue**. This building is opposite but slightly east of the Civic Campus of the Ottawa Hospital. There is east-west bus service along Carling Avenue and north-south on nearby Holland Avenue and this building is close to the Parkdale exit of the Queensway. The Neatby Building is wheel-chair accessible. Ample free parking is available in front of the building as well as on a parking lot just east of the building.

Our new temporary venue might not be quite as grand as we are used to but the talks we have scheduled will be just as good and the refreshments just as tasty as before. As in the past, we shall begin with a social half hour at 7:00 p.m. and the formal program will begin at 7:30 p.m. Join us for a good evening on the second Tuesday of each month.

Coming Events

arranged by the Excursions & Lectures Committee.

For further information,
call the Club number (722-3050).

Times stated for excursions are departure times. Please arrive earlier; leaders start promptly. If you need a ride, don't hesitate to ask the leader. Restricted trips will be open to non-members only after the indicated deadlines.

ALL OUTINGS: *Please bring a lunch on full-day trips and dress according to the weather forecast and activity. Binoculars and/or spotting scopes are essential on all birding trips. Unless otherwise stated, transportation will be by car pool.*

REGISTERED BUS TRIPS: *Make your reservation for Club bus excursions by sending a cheque or money order (Payable to The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club) to Box 35069, Westgate P.O., Ottawa, Ontario, K1Z 1A2, at least ten days in advance. Include your name, address, telephone number and the name of the outing. Your cooperation is appreciated by the Committee so that we do not have to wait to the last moment to decide whether a trip should be cancelled due to low registration. In order for the Club to offer a bus trip, we need just over 33 people to register. If fewer than 30 register, we have the option of cancelling the trip or increasing the cost. Such decisions must be done a week in advance so we encourage anyone who is interested in any bus trip to register as early as possible. We also wish to discourage postponing the actual payment of bus fees until the day of the event.*

EVENTS AT THE CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE: *The Club is grateful to the Museum for their cooperation, and thanks the Museum for the use of these excellent facilities.*

BIRD STATUS LINE: *Phone 860-9000 to learn of recent sightings or birding potential in the Ottawa area. To report recent sightings use the 860-9000 number and stay on the line. This service is run on behalf of the Birds Committee and is available to members and non-members.*

PLEASE NOTE: OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS FOR THE REST OF 2006 WILL BE HELD IN SALON B IN THE K.W. NEATBY BUILDING, CENTRAL EXPERIMENTAL FARM, 960 CARLING AVENUE.

Sunday
9 July
8:00 a.m.
to
mid afternoon

RAIL LINE WETLANDS

Leader: Stew Hamill

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of the parking lot, Richmond Road at Assaly Road, near Pizza Pizza, or at 9:30 a.m. at Spencerville (see below).

Carpoolers: For longer trips in private cars we suggest that the passengers contribute to the cost of gas.

The abandoned Kemptville-Prescott CP line gives access to a number of natural habitats. Several of these areas would be difficult to approach without the availability of such a well-constructed roadbed. Walking or driving portions of the line can provide a number of wildlife sightings. Two large marshes are accessed by the rail line: the Groveton Bog, a provincially-significant wetland and area of natural and scientific interest, and the headwaters of the South Branch South Nation River. We will visit one of these, depending on conditions. Waterbirds and their young should be more visible at this time of the summer. Wear hiking gear, and bring a lunch, water, field guides, and binoculars. Call or email trip leader Stew Hamill (269-3415, or shamill@ca.inter.net) if you wish to meet the group near or at the rail line (Spencerville area).

Sunday
30 July
9:00 a.m.

EXPLORING MCCARTHY WOODS

Leaders: Irwin & Fenja Brodo and Gordon Belyea

Meet: Billings Bridge Shopping Centre and Bus Terminal, on the southeast corner behind the shopping centre near Bank Street, or at 9:20 at Hunt Club/Riverside Community Centre, 3320 Paul Anka Drive at McCarthy Rd. These lovely old woods, right in the city of Ottawa, have been overlooked by many of us. There is a remarkable beech-maple stand featuring trees more than 100 years old. Other interesting features are Blue Beech, Hawthorns and an understory of shrubs and a rich carpet of flowers. These woods attract a good number of birds and are home to small mammals. Come explore these woods. We shall focus on lichens, insects, birds and whatever else comes across our paths. Hats, insect repellent, hand lenses or magnifying glasses, binoculars, field guides and a drink would be helpful on this long morning walk.

Thursday
3 August
7:30 a.m.
to
11:30 a.m.

EARLY FALL MIGRANTS

Leader: Tony Beck

Meet: Parking lot of Petrie Island. [Directions: Take the Queensway east and at the fork bear left and continue past Orleans to the Trim Rd. exit. Turn left (north) on Trim Rd. and continue to the end of the road.]

We will be visiting eastern lagoons for a variety of wetland species and migratory shore birds.

Saturday
12 August
6:00 a.m.

BIRDING AT RICHMOND LAGOONS

Leader: Peter Fuller (739-5639)

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre (northeast corner of the parking lot, Richmond Rd. at Assaly Rd near Pizza Pizza) or call Peter if you want to meet at the lagoons.

Early in the morning we are likely to see or hear many active marsh birds such as snipe, rails, moorhens, as well as duck families and also songbirds around the edges of the lagoon. It may be wet underfoot so wear appropriate shoes or boots and bring insect repellent.

Saturday
19 August
9:00 a.m.

SUMMER DAMSELS AND DRAGONS

Leaders: Bob Bracken and Christina Lewis

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of the parking lot at Richmond & Assaly Rd., near Pizza Pizza.

During this half-day outing we will visit two local "hot spots" for these prehistoric insects, beginning in the Britannia Conservation Area, where 56 species of odonates (damselflies and dragonflies) have been recorded over the last 10 years. We will proceed to the Bruce Pit on Cedarview Rd., where many special (and surprising!) species have also been recorded - 45 species so far - an amazing diversity for a small degraded pond which is known mainly for its popularity with dog-walkers! We will also explore other aspects of natural history along the way. Bring a snack and beverage, as well as an insect net and hand-lens if you have them. Field guides will be available to assist with identification. If the weather is inclement (i.e., rain), the trip is cancelled.

Carpoolers: For longer trips in private cars we suggest that the passengers contribute to the cost of gas.

Wednesday
23 August
7:00 a.m.

BIRDING IN BRITANNIA WOODS

Leader: John Cartwright

Meet: Cassels Road, Britannia Conservation Area, near the entrance to the Britannia Filtration Plant. (If you need a ride call John at 789-6714 to arrange for a pick-up.)

This is one of Ottawa's premier birding places because of the rich woods, Mud Lake and proximity to the Ottawa River. We shall be looking for migrating fall warblers and water birds on this morning bird walk.

Saturday
26 August
8:30 a.m.
to
noon

FALL FLOWERS

Leader: Connie Clark

Meet: MacDonalds restaurant on the northeast corner of the Billings Bridge shopping centre parking lot.

We will travel south and make a quick stop at the Giant Tiger parking lot NE corner of Blossom Park Shopping Centre west side of Bank St. 2.2 km past Hunt Club Rd. The last street before the shopping centre is Queensdale St.

The area we will explore is prone to wetness in some areas. Consider waterproof footwear. Trip cancelled if it rains. For more information call Connie Clark at 729-1815.

Sunday
27 August
8:00 a.m.

FALL MIGRANTS

Leader: Bernie Ladouceur

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre (northeast corner of the parking lot, Richmond Rd. at Assaly Rd near Pizza Pizza.)

We will likely be heading west of Ottawa, with stops at Britannia, Ottawa Beach, Shirleys Bay, etc. If other places have been producing good birds, we may switch at the last minute and head elsewhere.

Carpoolers: For longer trips in private cars we suggest that the passengers contribute to the cost of gas.

Saturday
9 September
8:00 a.m.

FALL BIRDING AT CONSTANCE BAY

Leaders: Jeff Skevington and Marilyn Ward
Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre (NE corner of the parking lot, Richmond Rd. at Assaly Rd near Pizza Pizza.) Marilyn will meet participants at Lincoln Fields to car pool to Constance Bay (30 minutes west), or call Jeff (832-1970) for the more westerly meeting place. On this half-day trip we will focus on birds but we shall enjoy the early fall. We shall explore the waterfront and some of the trails. Waterfowl, raptors and a good variety of migrating birds should be passing through.

Tuesday
12 September
7:00 p.m.
Social & Club
business
7:30 p.m.
Presentations

OFNC MONTHLY MEETING

MEMBERS' PHOTOGRAPHY NIGHT

Meet: Salon B, K.W. Neatby Building, Central Experimental Farm, 960 Carling Avenue.

Admission: At least one natural history slide or a digital presentation or \$2 donation to the Alfred Bog Fund. Many of us take pictures on Club outings or on our own, and this is our opportunity to share some special natural history shots with fellow members. The mix of different topics and different voices makes for an enjoyable evening. Bring your favourite or most recent photography of plants, animals, birds, insects, scenery, etc. (15 images max). We can handle slides and most digital presentations but check with us first about whether you might need to bring your own laptop (e.g., Macintosh users) or whether a CD (most IBM users) would suffice. We would like you to speak briefly about your images, but that is not a requirement. Please contact Marilyn at the Club number, 722-3050 to prearrange your presentation.

NATURE PREPARING FOR WINTER

Leader: Isabelle Nicol

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre (NE corner of the mall parking lot, junction of Richmond Road and Assaly Road, near Pizza Pizza) or 8:45 at the Beaver Trail Parking Lot, P 8, on Moodie Drive.

Stony Swamp is wonderful in all seasons. Join Isabelle to explore this unique conservation area and learn more about its flora and fauna. This time, however, it will be from the perspective of fall and the changes and preparations plants and animals must make to survive the harsh winter ahead. This should be a good day for the whole family, so bring children, parents and in-laws!

Our monthly meetings will be held in salon B in the K.W. Neatby Building, Central Experimental Farm, 960 Carling Ave.

**Saturday
7 October
8:00 a.m.
to
noon**

BRACKET FUNGI, TREE LICHENS, AND FERNS

Leader: Otto Loesel and Connie Clark

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner parking lot, jet of Richmond Rd. at Assaly Rd. by Pizza Pizza.

In October, when most flowers are gone and the leaves are starting to fall, fungi, lichens and ferns become more conspicuous. Bracket fungi and lichens growing on trees and ferns should be easy to find. If the woods are moist we are likely to find the more ephemeral fleshy fungi.

Otto will help us explore an area in the southern section of Gatineau Park. The exact site has not yet been determined. Sturdy footwear will be required as some climbing is involved. For those who wish to go directly to the site, phone Otto Friday Oct. 6 in the evening at 778-2556.

**Tuesday
10 October
7:00 p.m.
Social & Club
business**

OFNC MONTHLY MEETING

HISTORY OF THE SOUTH NATION WATERSHED

Speaker: Patrick Coyne

Meet: Salon B, K.W. Neatby Building, Central Experimental Farm, 960 Carling Avenue.

The South Nation Watershed is the sister watershed to the Rideau River and waters from the eastern parts of the Ottawa region flow into this watershed. Patrick, who is a historian, will talk about the impact of human settlement in this area, how the removal of tree cover stripped the land reducing this area to a desert. Patrick will also show us, in a PowerPoint presentation, various successful projects the South Nation Conservation Authority has established to ameliorate conditions and return the land to a more natural and viable landscape. The Larose Forest, destination for several field trips and a planned BioBlitz is in this watershed.

**7:30 p.m.
Speaker**

DEADLINE: *Material intended for the October - December issue must be in the editor's hands by August, 2006. Mail your manuscripts to:*

Karen McLachlan Hamilton 2980 Moodie Drive, Nepean, ON, K2J 4S7

H: (613) 838-4943; email: hamilton@storm.ca.

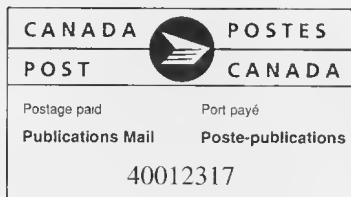
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